

# Masses

J. Soil Analyses



60/11  
Analytical Laboratory  
79, Mark Lane  
London, E.C. April 28<sup>th</sup> 1899.

Sample of Rubber Soil from Singapore

Marked Para Rubber grows better on this soil than on Ceylon soils

Received from Mr. John C. Willis, Royal Botanic Gardens, Peradeniya, Ceylon  
Composition in the air-dried condition.

Water (lost at 212°f)	6.288.
x. Organic Matter & volatile Combustible Substances	27.541
Oxides of Iron	3.198
Alumina	8.526
Lime	.272
Magnesia	.028
Potash	.093
Soda	.147
Phosphoric acid	.181
Sulphuric acid	.034
Carbonic acid	Trace
Nitric acid	.001
Chlorine	.007
Silica soluble in alkali	12.049
Insoluble Silicates & Quartz	41.635
	<hr/> 100.000
x Containing Nitrogen	.605
xx Containing Coarse Sand separated by washing	7.738.





Botanic Gardens, Singapore.

STRAITS SETTLEMENTS.

11th June 1906.

No. 238/06

Dear Sir,

Mr. Ridley will be away for perhaps the next three weeks and I briefly reply to your letter which I will also keep in view for Mr. Ridley's return.

If only ordinary clay soil is used for burning for the pepper gardens no good is likely to be effected, but I have always seen (and used) and understood pepper growers collected decayed leaves and top black soil from the jungle (the gradual accumulation) which was burnt and then applied. If due care is taken in what is collected this supplies a good percentage of lime and nitrogenous matter, and together with the humus a rich compost, easily assimilated, and of undoubted advantage to pepper vines.

Yours truly

For, Director of Gardens S.S

*C. S. S. S. S. S.*  
*C/o Messrs. Borneo Coy. Ltd.*  
*Singapore*

(1,000-Jan., 1905.)



Telephone No 347. Avenue.

HEAD OFFICE & BRANCHES  
Telegraphic Address, "BORNEO".  
Codes. A.I. ABC, Lieber's, Scott's & Watkins.

BRANCHES.  
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CHIENGMAL.

LLOYDS AGENTS AT  
BATAVIA.  
BANGKOK.  
SARAWAK.

*Borneo Company Limited,*  
*28, Fenchurch Street,*  
*London,* 17th May 1906  
*E.C.*

Claude Sugden, Esq.

Manager,  
The Borneo Co. Ltd.  
SINGAPORE.

Dear Sir,

In the cultivation of Pepper, burnt earth, as you are aware, is used as a manure. Four years ago we had a sample of it from Sarawak analysed here by Dr. Dyer, a leading authority in such matters. We enclose copy of his analysis, from which you will see he states that the earth he examined had no manurial value. We communicated this to our Kuching friends, but the use of burnt earth is still continued in the gardens on which we have made advances, the gardeners being firm believers that the earth is of great benefit to their vines. It may be that it performs some other important function for the plants than that of manuring them, of which we are unaware.

We shall be obliged if you will put the matter before the Head of the Botanical Gardens at Singapore, and ask him if he will kindly inform you what is the exact service, if any, that the burnt earth renders to the pepper. We can understand that some earths, according to their composition, might be of advantage to the vines, but we believe what is employed in



Mr. Sugden.

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Sarawak is practically little else than clay.

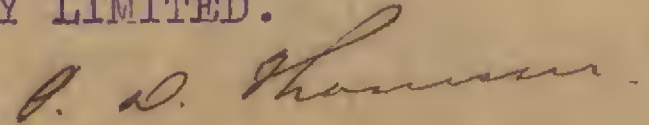
If it is a mistake to believe that the use of burnt earth in our Sarawak gardens is advantageous, then a large economy might be introduced into the cost of production of the pepper by discontinuing its use; and at the present time especially we need to study economy in every way possible, to carry on our gardens without serious loss.

Please advise Mr. Bryan, as well as ourselves, with regard to what you ascertain on this subject.

We are, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

For THE BORNEO COMPANY LIMITED.



Managing Director.

C O P Y.

Analytical Laboratory,  
17 Great Tower Street,  
London 2nd. May 1902.

RESULT OF ANALYSIS

717

Of a Sample of "Burnt Earth" (so labelled)

Sent by Messrs The Borneo Co., Ltd.

Moisture (Loss at 212°Fah.) .....	12.80
Organic Matter.....	3.42
Phosphoric Acid.....	.03
Silicious Matter.....	76.53
Oxide of Iron and Alumina.....	6.42
Lime.....	traces
Magnesia, Alkalies, &c.....	\$.80
	<u>100.00</u>

Nitrogen.....09

This is a very poor earth, containing only traces of lime and phosphoric acid. It has no value whatever as a manure, for which purpose I understand it has been used.

(Signed) Bernhard Dyer.

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Singapore  
11<sup>th</sup> June 1906

Dear Ridley,

Can you kindly  
give me any information  
on the point raised of  
what use is burnt earth.

Perhaps it was originally  
intended as a warning  
to the ants.

Yours sincerely  
C. Sugden

*Analysis of Soils*



Notes on various places from which samples come.

Sample 1. The place is not more than 1 1/2 miles from the sea, and quite near to the river, which is a tidal one, & consequently, practically salt water, at high tide. The land is not <sup>ordinarily</sup> flooded by river, but is only some 3 or 4 feet above it. It was used as Padi land some years ago, (Sawah) and is quite damp at this dry time; being quite a swamp, though not a heavy one, in anything but dry weather.

The jungle on the land side is fairly large trees, but the cleared land is covered with scrub, & rushes or small palms, there being no decent trees of second growth on it. A few coconuts, apparently old trees, are small & poor looking. The sample was taken close to the river ~~near the coconut trees~~.

Sample 2. This land is about 4 or 5 miles from the sea, and is on a tributary stream about 1 mile back from the main river. It is composed of swamp and slightly hilly ground. Padi has been planted for some years both in the swampy parts and on the higher land. The sample is from the rising ground. Fairly big jungle surrounds the cleared swamp. The <sup>low</sup> land seems well above the influence of tides, but would be under water perhaps as much as 3 or 4 feet in floods.

Sample 3. This is from a place about 9 miles from the sea, and lies behind a small range of hills running along river bank. The ~~low~~ <sup>range</sup> slopes inland, and at a distance of about 1/4 mile back, the land becomes flat and just above the level of swamp on both sides of it. It would be very wet in rainy weather, & would be flooded in flood times. It is covered with very fine jungle



trees, the finest seen in any of the lower reaches of the Kuantan river; and the undergrowth is sparse. <sup>Hill</sup> Padi has been successfully grown on the higher ground towards the range.

Sample 4 is from land about 16 miles from sea. It is from the left bank of a tributary stream about 1 mile back from main river. The land is some 10 feet above river level and has been, in places, used for hill padi growing.

Sample 5 is from the right bank of No 4 stream, but from lower land. The land on both sides of this stream is alternately swampy and up to 10 or 12 ft high, the swampy parts being matted with roots which would cause great trouble in clearing, doubtless.



Agricultural Chemistry Laboratory.

University College of Wales.

Aberystwyth.

To The Fawcett Corporation Limited.

Windsfield House,

London W.C.2.

A REPORT upon examination of soils by John Alan Murray, B.Sc.,  
F.R.S., Lecturer in Agricultural Chemistry in the University  
College of Wales, Aberystwyth: Agricultural Analysis for the  
counties of Merioneth, Montgomery, Cardigan, Carmarthen, Pembrokeshire  
and Radnor.

.....

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22nd June, 1929.



The samples were received in separate canvas bags, marked "1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 respectively, packed in a box sent from Singapore to London, where forwarded to me unopened, and were received here on the 15th of October, 1897.

These samples, which were taken from different parts of the Chinese Territory in the Malay Peninsula, were found to consist of air-dried specimens and representing the soil of the particular locality to a depth of three feet, and were chiefly used in the determination of the chemical composition of the soils.

At my request, however, three further samples of the soil "in situ" to a depth of 18 inches were procured and were chiefly used by me for examination of the  $\lambda$  physical properties. They were forwarded to me direct by express time marked A, B, and C respectively and were received here on the 15th of May, 1898.

The soils exhibit a striking similarity both in physical properties and in chemical composition and have apparently all been formed under <sup>and</sup> exposed to similar natural conditions.

From the facts that the first lot of samples represent the soil to a depth of three feet and that each appears to be uniform throughout, I gather that the deposits must be of considerable ~~depth~~ - a fact of no little importance in the cultivation of tropical plants many of which have long tap roots.

The soil particles have an average (true) specific gravity of 2.65 and, for the most part, appear to consist of a finely hydrated silicate of alumina mixed with a varying, but unusually small proportion of quartz sand; colloidal clay, however, is entirely absent. The material is probably derived from the disintegration of the igneous matter of granitic rocks, but it is difficult to form a reliable opinion on this point as absolutely nothing which could be called a stone or fragment of the original rock was found in the samples.

The state of division of the particles is, on the contrary, extremely fine. Practically all the particles have an average



diameter of less than one-thirtieth part of an inch and nearly  
sixty per cent of them have an average diameter of less than  
one-hundredth part of an inch. Some have a diameter which has  
a diameter twice to the inch. It will be observed that samples  
"1" and "2" are somewhat exceptional in this respect, the former  
being rather finer and the latter markedly coarser than the  
average.

The soil is mass, in consequence of this condition,  
massive, approximately, the properties of a clay mass but,  
owing to the absence of organic matter, it is free from some  
of the more objectionable features of that substance. Thus, it  
is very finely porous and, when wet, is plastic and cohesive but  
will probably be found to be more easily worked than ordinary  
stiff clays, as it allows of more ready permeation of water. It  
is not so liable to become waterlogged and cause rotting of  
the roots of plants.

In relation to water the properties of the soils are  
unusually satisfactory. They contain large quantities of  
water, and when the point of saturation is reached the water passes  
downward with fair facility, and when fully saturated they still  
remain nearly saturated. The coefficient of evaporation is  
relatively low and, conversely, the power of absorbing water and  
holding it from the surface is fairly high. The capillary power  
of the soils, again, is very great, i.e. when any layer has raised  
water from considerable depth against the influence of  
gravity etc., of course, the movement of the water is unob-  
trusively slow. This property is one of great importance for it tends  
to keep the upper layers of the soil moist in dry weather.  
On the other hand, in periods of prolonged drought such as these  
soils will have to withstand if tends to promote evaporation by  
raising the water to the surface. This tendency can, however,  
be greatly reduced by keeping the immediate surface layer (and  
a couple of inches) in a loose condition; this layer would have



because very dry but as water would not so readily pass into it  
by capillary action the lower layers of the soil would remain  
more moist.

The colour of the soil in the dry state is a light greyish  
pink which changes to a redder appearance on re-moistening owing to  
further oxidation of compounds of iron, but there is nothing to  
indicate that the soils are insufficiently supplied with oxygen  
in their natural state. The light colour of the soils will  
enable them to reflect a large amount of heat and so tend to  
keep them cool.

The structure of the soils as regards is considerable. They  
have nearly twenty per cent of their volume as broken from  
the surface to the dry condition and most therefore have  
considerable porosity on the roots of plants. Cracking also  
produces cracks which seriously interfere with irrigation. In,  
however, that is not very rapid. I do not anticipate any  
very serious results from this cause.

The proportion of organic matter (humus) present is estimated  
to these soils to be within limits of about 0.5 per cent. It is not  
as high as that in soils of the same type in other parts of the world  
to which it is compared. The amount of organic matter present is  
the proportion of water and air which they contain. On  
the average it appears to vary from one and a half to two and a  
half per cent of the dry <sup>matter</sup>. This quantity though small  
is not much below the average normally found in tropical climates  
and the soils must not therefore be regarded as seriously  
deficient in this respect.

The average amount of the soil available is slight degree  
of alkaline reaction being, apparently, in the presence of small  
quantities of alkaline carbonates and silicates.

The Plant Food (i.e. mineral substances available for the  
growth of plants) may be approximately divided into three classes  
or states as follows - (1) soluble in cold dilute acids, (2)  
insoluble in cold dilute acids but soluble in hot concentrated



which (3) is available in the same manner. The first class includes all the materials at present in a position available for the plant; the second class includes the first and also a quantity of materials at present in a position available for which will probably change into that state; the third class consists of fragments of materials which are partially developed materials from which the second and first class are derived, but <sup>9</sup>/<sub>1</sub> consider that, in material of this character, once changed into products which are especially in a tropical climate.

The available material constitutes from eight to ten per cent of the dry matter and consists chiefly of free silica (quartz) and of silicate of alumina with about ten per cent of potash.

The available material is not concentrated in any one place to about one per cent of the dry matter in each of the first three samples, is about thirteen per cent in sample "B" and to a much smaller quantity in each of the two remaining samples. It consists largely of oxides of iron and alumina; the proportion of other ingredients - of which phosphoric acid, potash, soda and lime are the most important - are so small that the soil must be regarded as deficient in these ingredients. Indeed under any system of cultivation in which heavy crops were frequently removed from the land the whole stock would in all probability become rapidly exhausted.

The available potash and phosphoric acid are the only ingredients which it is necessary to estimate in the first class and it will be noted that the quantities found are extremely minute. They are certainly far below what is found to be necessary for a high degree of fertility in English soils and even allowing for the climate I am of opinion that the soils are seriously deficient in these two important substances.

In summary briefly then, it may be said that the results of the various tests show clearly that, as regards their physical properties, the soils are excellently adapted for tropical







I have indicated above, should be extremely well and the low land near the river, if not swampy, seems to be tolerably well adapted for the growth of *Downy-wood* which could not suffer much by occasional flooding.

The *Canoe* old plant is a hardy one and might thrive where other medicinal plants would not.

Two medicinal plants of various kinds appear to offer a more promising field for operations. *Ample* and *Logwood* (if it can be said to be cultivated) might be expected to thrive extremely well and even *Indigo* and *Turneric*, which are somewhat more difficult to cultivate, might be expected to succeed if they should be grown on the slopes.

Spices with possible exception of *Pepper* I should expect to obtain almost the most profitable crops this land is capable of bearing. *Pimento* <sup>or</sup> "all-eyes" and *Cinnamon* will probably give best results and may be grown on almost any part of the land but very satisfactory crops of nutmeg, cloves and ginger should also be obtained on the slopes.

*Demerol* and *ginger* are usually grown together in India and at the same time the latter would probably also succeed as it is not so hardy as *Demerol*.

For Tea and Coffee the soil appears to be particularly well adapted and in my opinion the higher lands, where the latter were to be first considered, might be very advantageously utilized for this purpose if suitable varieties were obtained. Both *Tea* and *Coffee* have been successfully grown at elevations as great as 6,000 feet above sea level and some varieties do not thrive below 1000 feet.

Tobacco would in all probability give very good results. The soil is not rich enough and is too stiff. The plant would <sup>particularly</sup> suffer from the deficiency of lime and potash.

Sugar cane. So far as the general character of the soil is concerned, almost as well suited as the lower lands but the deficiency of lime in the soil would probably prove fatal to the



success of this crop.

That plants of amaranth would of course be a  
very early and the last appears to be of very suitable quality  
for the growth of rice and wheat (Burmese) and the  
mixture generally. These and sweet potatoes plant and be grown  
as the crops and the finest qualities of these plants are not  
usually obtained on land of such stiff character.

In considering the foregoing opinion it should not be for-  
gotten that, as I have already stated, the soil is susceptible  
of considerable improvement and indeed might be so modified as  
to render it suitable for rice plant for which it is not  
naturally so well adapted. However the lighter and more  
character of single "B" and, <sup>the</sup> fact that (as I understand) it  
lies on a gentle slope and is therefore subject to free drainage,  
affords a strong indication that those plants which thrive best  
on light soils would be grown best in that locality, if at all.

The improvement of the soil is largely a question of expense  
and is to that extent beyond the scope of this report but I can  
suggest that any steps you may see fit to take for this purpose  
should take the direction of increasing the proportions of lime,  
manure, and available potash and phosphoric acid.

Frequent application of heavy manure or bulky organic  
manure, such as farm yard material would amount to about the  
best way of effecting such improvement as it would not only  
increase the percentage of humus in the soil but also of avail-  
able plant food except lime. As, however, I feel bound to  
warn that such material could not be easily produced in any-  
thing like sufficient quantity I should advise a series of more or  
less continuous of green crop manuring. On planted lands the  
green crop can be raised between the rows of trees or shrubs  
and it is about the time it comes to flower. In the  
West Indies the green crop is usually "Vigna bean" or some  
variety of "Mung bean" but in the East Indies "Mung bean" is  
commonly preferred as cheaper and better. However, I should



any that are not, in the opinion of the committee, of which several are now to be removed in the district, will be for the purpose. The process may be repeated almost without limit, except under very many places, and in some places the constant ploughing in of weeds and grass is not sufficient.

It will be quite obvious from the above that the process of  
green manuring does not affect the fertility of the soil in respect  
of the phosphates and potash. It accelerates the growth from  
the seed available to the available stage but it does not  
directly increase the proportions of those substances in the  
soil I have just advised to advise that they should be  
added. Unfortunately I cannot find any authentic accounts of  
liming in tropical climates and it is impossible to forecast  
exactly what the result of such an operation might be under the  
circumstances but I fully anticipate that it would be a remarkably  
good one as well as being of great value to the plant  
and also as regards its action upon the other constituents  
of the soil. The results relating to the action of potash and  
phosphorus are somewhat less certain and therefore slightly  
more difficult to point to the conclusion that these elements  
are of comparatively little value in the tropics. Nevertheless  
I am strongly of opinion that a trial should be made on the  
following lines:-

If the deposits of limestone which I understand exist in various parts of the Territory are of uniform quality and are available from the Government's territory a piece of land should first be well lined and afterwards treated with superphosphate at the rate of from six to eight tons per acre, - in this case further manure would probably be unnecessary. If however the land cannot be treated at intervals and the piece of land should be given a good crop at the rate of from eight to ten tons per acre and a heavy dressing of superphosphate at the rate of from six to eight tons per acre. If equally convenient either of these methods might be tried and the results compared.



indication as to the profitability or otherwise of both methods

If the plan of green manuring, which I have suggested, is adopted nitrogenous manure will be of less importance but where it is found necessary or desirable to supply these plants of manure will certainly be found to be the most suitable kind as for these soils and will I expect prove a very effective manure for such crops.

Whenever possible all artificial manures should be applied immediately after the rains have ceased. If any case where the land is subject to flooding it will probably be found advantageous to work these manures slightly into the soil in order to diminish risk of loss. Where the land is "crust" by the flood of course even this precaution could not be sufficient.

In conclusion I may say that cultivation is strongly recommended by many tropical farmers as a means of increasing the fertility of the land but it seems to me to be the slightest of things to do to the land and it seems to me to be the slightest of things to do to the land and it seems to me to be the slightest of things to do to the land at the beginning of the dry season especially if the land is under crop.

(Signed) J. Allen Harvey.



Chemical Composition of Soils.  
expressed in Ounces per cubic foot \*

Number of Sample. . . . .	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
Inorganic (mineral) matters dissolved by concentrated acids.	ounces	ounces	ounces	ounces	ounces	ounces.
Soda.	1.304	.711	.811	.695	1.259	.936.
i Potash.	1.092	1.063	1.063	.764	.668	1.252.
Magnesia.	.569	.459	1.211	1.491	.613	.828
Lime.	1.448	.935	1.273	1.074	.656	.855.
Oxides of iron and aluminium.	80.913.	85.868	86.584	66.565	54.466	120.414.
Chlorine.	.381	.294	.349	.299	.340	.516.
Silica	2.886	2.598	3.343	2.455	2.185	2.706.
Carbonic acid.	3.144	1.154	2.417	3.233	3.074	2.597.
Sulphuric acid.	.601	.346	.472	.543	.655	.524.
ii Phosphoric acid.	.525	.903	.886	1.106	.985	1.160.
do Insoluble in concentrated acids.						
Potash.	22.197	19.911	20.811	24.079	26.621	27.662.
Fluorine, loss etc.	1.385	.313.		3.340	.033.	
Silica (including free quartz.)	342.280.	354.220	426.417	591.527	583.866	403.970
Oxides of iron and aluminium.	459.690	443.770	373.184	251.337	259.794.	361.782
iii Organic (vegetable) matters and combined water.	76.581	82.406	76.768	46.486	59.779.	76.550
Water evaporated at ordinary temperatures.	564.404.	568.235	568.752	497.450	518.293.	563.236.
Residual water evaporated at 212 d. Fahr.	30.596	26.765	26.248.	15.422	13.671	26.764.
Total mass of one cubic foot.	1589.986.	1589.951	1590.589.	1507.866.	1526.968	1591.752.
i Containing Potash in an available state.	.119.	.159	.126	.150	.145	.107.
ii Containing Phosphoric acid in an available state.	.053	.054	.044	.041	.032	.025.
iii Containing Nitrogen.	1.028	.741	.846	.786	.731	.847.
Containing Carbon.	6.268	6.368	7.562	4.378.	6.865	6.467.

\* These figures multiplied by 2722 will give the quantities (lbs.) of each ingredient per acre.  
twelve inch deep.



# Physical Properties of the Soil.

## Mass and Volume relations

True specific gravity.	2.59.	Percentage of total space occupied by dry solid matter.	38.27.
Apparent specific gravity.	0.995	" " water	59.50.
Total mass of one cubic foot in situ.	99.4 lbs	" " air and gases.	2.23.

## Relation of the Soil to Water.

One cubic foot of soil in situ can contain when fully saturated	38.7 lbs of water.
" " retain " " drained	37.9 " "
" " was found to contain	37.1 " "

Average rate of percolation of water through saturated soil = 2.17 inches of water in 24 hours.

Average rate of evaporation of water at 90 d. Fahr = 0.37 " "

Average rate of absorption of water vapour from atmosphere at 60 d. Fahr. = 0.05 " "

Capillarity; dry soil can raise water against the influence of gravitation to a height of over 30 inches.

at an average rate of 1.25 inches in 24 hours.

Water soaks into the dry soil under the influence of gravitation at an average rate of 4.4 " "

## State of division of Samples.

Percentage of dry soil passed through.

Sample.	Meshes per square inch in sieve.			
	225	900	3600	10000.
1.	99.8	99.2	74.6	52.7
2.	100.0	99.1	77.9	60.8
3.	100.0	99.9	92.1	71.6
4.	100.0	99.6	80.8	58.0
5.	91.4	68.3	35.5	16.1
6.	99.3	95.6	75.0	60.2
Mean	98.4	93.6	72.6	53.2.

## Relative proportions of Sand and Clay per cent.

Sample	1	2	3	4	5	6.
Free Quartz.	5.58.	10.18.	13.07	39.91	55.52.	13.24.
Argillaceous matter.	94.42	89.82	86.93	60.09	44.48	86.76.



# Chemical Composition of the Dry Matter of the Soil. Per Cent.

Number of sample	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
Inorganic (mineral) matters dissolved by concentrated acids.	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent	percent.
Soda.	.1311	.0751	.0815	.0699	.1266	.0941.
i. Potash.	.1098	.1068	.1069	.0768	.0672	.1258.
Magnesia.	.0572	.0471	.1217.	.1499	.0616	.0833.
Lime.	.1456	.0940.	.1280	.1080	.0660	.0860.
Oxides of iron & aluminium	8.1320	8.6300	8.7420	6.6900	5.4740	12.1020.
Chlorine.	.0383	.0296	.0351	.0301	.0342	.0519.
Silica.	.2901	.2612	.3360	.2468	.2196	.2720.
Carbonic acid.	.3160	.1160	.2430	.3250	.3090	.2162.
Sulphuric acid.	.0604	.0348	.0475	.0546	.0659.	.0527.
ii Phosphoric acid.	.0528	.0908.	.0891	.1112.	.0990	.1160.
Insoluble in concentrated acids.						
Potash.	2.2309.	2.0011	2.0901.	2.4200.	2.6755.	2.7801.
Fluorine, loss etc.	.1392.	.0315.	.1112.	.3357.	.0034.	
Silica (including free quartz).	34.4000.	35.6000.	42.8560.	59.4500.	58.6800.	40.6000.
Oxides of iron and aluminium.	46.2000.	44.6000.	37.5060.	25.2600.	26.1100.	36.3600.
iii Organic (vegetable) matters and combined water.	7.6966.	8.2820.	7.7154.	4.6720.	6.0080.	7.6940.
	100.0000	100.0000	100.0613	100.0000	100.0000	100.6347.

i. Containing Potash in an available state.	.0120	.0160	.0172.	.0151	.0146	.0180.
ii Containing Phosphoric acid in an available state.	.0053.	.0055.	.0045	.0041	.0032	.0026.
iii Containing { Nitrogen. Carbon.	.1034.	.0745	.0851	.0790	.0736	.0852.
	.6300	.6400	.7600	.4400	.6900	.650.